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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KE](#) [SO](#)
SUBJECT: KENYAN RECRUITMENT FOR SOMALIA CONTINUES,
PARLIAMENT INVESTIGATES

REF: A. NAIROBI 2397
[1](#)B. SECSTATE 108034
[1](#)C. NAIROBI 2169
[1](#)D. NAIROBI 2141
[1](#)E. NAIROBI 2103
[1](#)F. IIR 6 854 0003 10
[1](#)G. NAIROBI 1861
[1](#)H. 08 NAIROBI 2290

Classified By: Ambassador Michael Ranneberger, reasons 1.4 a,b,d

Summary

[1](#)1. (S/NF) As the fight for control over Somalia's Kismayo and Lower Juba region drags on, the Government of Kenya appears determined to send 2,000-4,000 newly trained recruits into Somalia, reportedly in December. Recent discussions indicate that many if not most of these recruits are in fact Kenyans of Somali origin from the Mandera region. It is not clear to what extent Kenyan government representatives are involved in the recruiting of Kenyans. We have been told that Somali fighters who already received training from the Kenyan military were supposed to be responsible for recruitment of new forces; however, this recruitment was supposed to have occurred in Somalia, which does not appear to be the case. Regardless, Kenyan recruits are reportedly being lured with promises of jobs, money, and an association with either the UN or AMISOM. The Parliamentary Committee on Defense and Foreign Relations recently traveled to Garissa to investigate reports of recruitment from Garissa town and spoke with outraged parents and religious leaders as well as provincial government officials. Convinced that the reports were credible and that the Government's actions are not in Kenya's national interest, the committee has been talking to government ministers to pressure them to halt the recruitment and training of Kenyans. Since then, we were asked by the Clerk of Parliament not to allow the committee to interact with a visiting delegation of former U.S. Congressmen because of their ongoing investigation. At this point it appears unlikely that the internal and parliamentary pressure to keep Kenyan Somalis out of the fight in Somalia will succeed. It appears increasingly unlikely that this effort would even have any positive effect on the fight to expel al-Shabaab from Lower Juba. On the contrary, the costs of the operation may well outweigh the potential benefits. End Summary.

Background: Kenya's Plan to Help Oust al-Shabaab

[1](#)2. (S/NF) As the Department is aware, a Kenyan plan to train Somalis to expel al-Shabaab from Gedo and the Lower and

Middle Juba region (Ref G) is underway. As originally envisioned, the Kenyan Army would train 36 Somalis and insert them back into Somalia with ethnic Somali Kenyan retired military officers assigned as military advisors. The plan later evolved into a larger-scale recruitment effort by the original 36 trained Somalis, who were supposed to recruit up to 4,000 additional Somalis for training at Kenyan military bases.

¶3. (S/NF) As the Kenyan plan has evolved, however, it appears to have become disconnected from local efforts to confront al-Shabaab inside Lower and Middle Juba (ref A). Also, the recruiting effort has stretched into Kenya's North Eastern Province (Refs C and D).

Kenyans May Form Bulk of Fighting Force

¶4. (C) In spite of our interventions (Ref B), Assistant Secretary Carson's discussions with senior Kenyan officials in which he made clear our concerns, and the protests of local communities, we understand that recruitment is ongoing, at least in Mandera District. Ethnic Somali Members of Parliament have told our (ethnic Somali) FSN staff that up to 1,200 recruits have come from Mandera East and Mandera West Districts alone. The recruits are attracted by promises that appear to vary with the recruiters and the region, but include a \$600 monthly salary, promises that they will be working under the auspices of AMISOM (or the United Nations or the African Union) and will return to secure jobs in the

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Kenyan Army.

¶5. (S/NF) Various sources told us recently that approximately 2,000 recruits are being trained at two locations: one at a military base at Archer's Post near Isiolo and the other at a Kenya Wildlife Service training facility in Tsavo West National Park (Manyani). Reportedly recruiting is still underway. A local safari company that is providing tents for the trainees in the two training locations told PolOff on November 25 that the tents are now housing approximately 3,500 people. All of the recruits from Mandera, we understand, are training in Archer's Post and recruits from Garissa were being taken to Manyani.

Deployment Delayed By Logistics Issues

¶6. (S/NF) The Kenyans have faced delays in obtaining the weapons necessary to complete the training and deploy the recruits because the original purchase request, made to a weapons broker in the UK, was refused by the UK government export control authorities. We understand that the Kenyans have since secured a deal with the Government of Ukraine for guns and associated munitions. The latest estimate is that the force will be trained and ready for insertion into Somalia by mid-December, although it is likely that the date will slip further. (Note: It is our understanding that the weapons shipment from the Ukraine was being held until the Ukrainians receive payment for a shipment of 33 T-72 tanks bound for the Government of South Sudan. The tanks have been in storage in Kenya for a year after their existence and intended destination were inadvertently publicized when the ship carrying them, the M/V Faina, was hijacked by Somali pirates in September 2008 (Ref H). End note.)

¶7. (C) The delay in the deployment is revealing the Government's possible financial limitations in supporting this operation. The safari company providing the tents for the recruits initially agreed to do so for 21 days, and on November 17 extended the contract for another 21 days. The company's owner told PolOff that he has yet to be paid in full for either contract -- the government has paid \$472,000

of a total of \$1.75 million owed, he said. His staff have been alternately told that the money is available in the Treasury but requires the consent of "the donors" (cited to him as the U.S. and UK governments as well as the African Union) and that the tents will "be burned" if the company tries to remove them from the training camps for non-payment.

National Security and Intelligence Service (NSIS) Director Michael Gichangi has reportedly requested KSH 13 billion (approximately \$173 million) from the Government to fund the operation, which probably includes an amount to be siphoned off by him.

Parliamentary Committee Investigates

¶8. (C) Eleven Committee members from the Parliamentary Committee on Defense and International Affairs traveled to Garissa the week of November 9 to investigate reports that Kenyan Somalis were being targeted for recruitment. Committee Chair Adan Keynan told PolOff that the members spoke with the local community and provincial government officials and were told that because of their protests, 144 youth who had been recruited under what they claimed to have been false pretenses (i.e., they were unaware that they would be deploying to Somalia and not working for the United Nations) were released and had returned home. More recruits, they were told, had been released from the Manyani training camp and dropped off in Voi but had not been able to make their way back to Garissa (a six and a half hour trip over difficult roads). The committee members were sufficiently convinced of the credibility of the reports that they made a last-minute change to their itinerary and drove to Voi, where they personally arranged for the return of 48 youth back to Garissa. The itinerary change kept the members up for 32 hours with no sleep, Keynan said.

¶9. (C) Keynan, who is ethnic Somali, said that like the provincial administration officials they met in Garissa, the committee members themselves were hesitant to interfere in security matters, but in the end they believed that the recruitment of Kenyan youth to fight in Somalia posed a

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national security risk for Kenya. In the end, committee members were determined to do what they could to stop it. "While we think it is important to support Somalia's Transitional Federal Government to promote stability on Kenya's border with Somalia, this is not the way to do it," Keynan said. Furthermore, he opined, if the government were actually training Somali police, like they have claimed publicly, Kenyans should be proudly escorting them from the border to Kenyan training camps. On the contrary, he said, the Government has shrouded the entire operation in secrecy.

¶10. (C) Since the visit to Garissa, the committee has been calling on the Ministry of Immigration, the Ministry of Internal Security, the Ministry of Defense, and NSIS to persuade them to stop supporting the operation. Keynan said that he would negotiate with the Ministry of Defense to take the committee to the training center at Archer's Post to investigate how many of the recruits may in fact be Kenyans and was seeking an audience with President Kibaki and Prime Minister Odinga. (Note: This is not the first time that Keynan has tried to get his committee to exercise its oversight mandate over the Kenyan military. His committee drafted a report recommending that military officials be investigated and held accountable for human rights abuses during a 2008 security operation in Mount Elgon. End note.)

¶11. (C) So far, the committee's work has not been received well by the Government. The Clerk of Parliament recently asked staffers coordinating the visit of a delegation of former U.S. Congressmen not to meet with Keynan's committee due to the sensitivity of the committee's recent activities. (Note: The delegation was planning to conduct a session on

the role of parliamentary oversight. End note.)

Comment

¶12. (S/NF) It is hard to say how effective Keynan will be in convincing the Government to change course. While other Somali Kenyan Cabinet members, including Assistant Minister of Livestock Aden Duale, Assistant Minister of Energy Mohammed Maalim and Assistant Minister for Public Services Aden Sugow, are clearly worried about what will happen when Somali Kenyan youth return from Somalia with military skills and no jobs, a consensus view has not emerged from the Somali Kenyan political class. Minister of Defense Yusuf Haji has been sitting on the fence: while he has supported the release of positively identified Kenyans from the training camps, he is perceived by other ethnic Somali politicians as a sellout and a government yes-man, allowing the training to continue. Deputy Speaker of Parliament Farah Maalim, another Somali Kenyan, has remained mum on the issue (and most likely supports the training-and-insertion plan). His fellow ethnic Somali politicians have criticized his excessive involvement in Somali politics, which they say is to the detriment of the interests of his constituency. NSIS Director Gichangi is the "mastermind" of the Government's plan and has convinced President Kibaki of its wisdom. It appears that the Government is willing to risk, a barely disguised intervention in Somalia.

¶13. (C) Should the logistical hurdles be overcome, it also remains to be seen whether the Kenyans' effort will be worth the risks. From all outside accounts, the Kenyan recruits are not experienced fighters and have little motivation to participate in the operation beyond promises of money and secure employment. If they do in fact make up the majority of the fighting force, their tenacity and loyalty will be questionable, especially if the Government of Kenya is unable to follow through on its promises. Furthermore, since the Kenyan plan appears to be increasingly disconnected from the forces currently fighting in Somalia, the insertion of the Kenyan-trained forces is very likely to cause intra-clan conflict that distracts all parties from confronting al-Shabaab as they fight each other (Ref A).

¶14. (C) We will continue to make the point in our conversations with Kenyan officials that the risks of employing Somali Kenyans in this effort outweigh any potential benefits.
RANNEBERGER